SPORT

Alex Marquez clinches Portuguese MotoGP sprint

PORTIMAO: Spaniard Alex Marquez put his crash in qualifying behind him to win the Portuguese MotoGP sprint race on Saturday at the Portimao circuit.

The Ducati-Gresini rider — guaranteed to finish second in the championship behind his brother Marc — finished ahead of compatriot Pedro Acosta (KTM), and Italian Marco Bezzecchi riding an Aprilia.

After a superb start from pole position, Bezzecchi could not hold off Acosta, who was in excellent form and then Marquez, who had started fifth on the grid.

The day's winner overtook Acosta with four laps to go. The 21-year-old is still waiting for his first victory in the premier class, which he joined in 2024.

Starting third on the grid, the 2021 world champion, Frenchman Fabio Quartararo, finished fourth on his Yamaha, well ahead of former two-time champion, Italian Francesco Bagnaia who was eighth for Ducati.

With the world championship and runner-up titles already secured by the Marquez brothers, the battle for third place in the championship is still wide open.

At the end of this 12-lap race — compared to 24 laps for Sunday's main event — Bezzecchi remains third and now has a 10-point lead over Bagnaia, who is fourth overall.

Injured Marc Marquez and his compatriot, 2024 world champion Jorge Martin of Aprilia, did not make the trip to Portugal.—AFP

BK8 GRESINI Racing team's Spanish rider Alex Marquez celebrates winning the MotoGP Portuguese Grand Prix sprint race at the Algarve International Circuit on Saturday.—AFP

Irish governing body backs call for UEFA to ban Israel

DUBLIN: Members of Irish football's governing body voted overwhelmingly on Saturday for its board to request that UEFA immediately suspend Israel from European competitions, the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) said.

A resolution passed by the FAI members cited alleged violations by Israel's Football Association of two provisions of UEFA statutes: its failure to implement and enforce an effective anti-racism policy and the playing by Israeli clubs in occupied Palestinian territories without the consent of the Palestinian Football Association.

The resolution was backed by 74 votes, with seven opposed and two abstentions, the FAI said in a statement.

A spokesperson for UEFA did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

UEFA considered holding a vote early last month on whether to suspend Israel from European competitions over the war in Gaza, a source told Reuters at the time. That did not happen after a US-brokered ceasefire took effect on Oct 10.

The Irish resolution follows calls in September from the heads of the Turkish and Norwegian soccer governing bodies for Israel to be suspended from international competition.

Those requests came after United Nations experts appealed to FIFA and UEFA to suspend Israel from international football, citing a UN Commission of Inquiry report that said Israel had committed genocide during the war in Gaza.

Israel has denied committing genocide and described the report as scandalous.—Reuters

SAO PAULO: McLaren's British driver Lando Norris (L) races ahead of Mercedes' Kimi Antonelli of Italy during the sprint of the Sao Paulo Formula One Grand Prix at the Jose Carlos Pace racetrack on Saturday.—AFP

Norris extends title lead in Sao Paulo GP sprint after Piastri spin

SAO PAULO: Lando Norris extended his lead in the drivers' world championship to nine points on Saturday when, after his McLaren team-mate Oscar Piastri crashed out, he won the sprint race at the Sao Paulo Grand Prix.

His victory by eight-tenths of a second ahead of Mercedes' teenage Italian rookie Kimi Antonelli earned him eight points to lift him to 365 points in the title race ahead of Piastri on 356 and four-time champion Max Verstappen of Red Bull, who finished fourth, on 326.

Norris was 0.845 seconds ahead of a feisty Antonelli at the chequered flag with George Russell third in the second Mercedes ahead of Verstappen, Charles Leclerc of Ferrari and Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso.

Piastri lost control and hit the barriers on lap six of the 24-lap race at a slippery Interlagos circuit, damaging his car and his title hopes after losing his leadership of the championship two weeks ago in Mexico.

The race in mixed conditions ended with another spectacular accident when local hero Gabriel Bortoleto hit the barriers heavily twice in his Sauber at the Senna Esses on the final lap, losing both front and rear wings. He was unhurt.

"It was tough," said Norris. "So it is more rewarding to win like this, especially with Kimi there not making my life easy. I had to push and it was a bit sketchy and a struggle at the end on the soft tyres. We have some homework to do before qualifying."

Antonelli said: "It was a fun race in very trick conditions and we tried to keep the pressure on Lando, but just came up short."

After heavy rain earlier, the race began in drying air with temperatures of 23 (air) and 26 (track) and a keen gusty wind, causing a mixture of soft and medium tyres to be selected in the treacherous conditions.

Norris made a clean start but then Piastri, running third, took the kerb at turn three and went spinning off at the Curva do Sol, his trajectory taking Sauber's Nico Hulkenberg and Alpine's Franco Colapinto with him as they followed his line five laps later.

A safety car was deployed immediately, quickly followed by a red flag on lap eight.

Hulkenberg succeeded in guiding his damaged car back to the pits for repairs — a new front and rear wing — and was permitted to rejoin the fray once the barriers were repaired.

But for Piastri it was not only a second consecutive pointless sprint race, but also a costly setback to his title challenge on a day when he hoped to restrict Norris's advantage.

After a 24-minute hiatus, during which several drivers including Norris, on softs, changed tyres, the race resumed with a rolling start for lap nine.

Norris, again, advanced with aplomb.

For Piastri, whose early-season consistency has crumbled in recent weeks, it was another session to forget.

"I am trying to put that behind me," he said. "Let's see what sort of weather we are going to have this afternoon — and of course there are a lot more points tomorrow.

"I will try to do a better job in qualifying and get a better starting sport for the race."—AFP

Sabalenka beats Anisimova in last-four match at WTA Finals

RIYADH: World number one Aryna Sabalenka had to dig deep to overcome fourth-seeded Amanda Anisimova 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 in a high-octane semi-final at the WTA Finals in Riyadh on Friday.

The Belarusian four-time major winner roared her way to a championship showdown with Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina, who battled past fifth-seeded Jessica Pegula 4-6, 6-4, 6-3 earlier at the King Saud University Indoor Arena.

Sabalenka clocked 12 aces and saved six of nine break points to book her place in the final for a second time in five appearances at the season-ending championships.

"She always pushes me to play my best tennis," said Sabalenka, who gave Anisimova a warm embrace at the net after the match.

"Honestly, I wouldn't care if I would lose this match because we both played an incredible match and we both deserve to be in the final.

"I'm super happy to get the win. I told Amanda that she should be proud of her season, she played incredible tennis the whole season, but it's just the beginning for her. There are many good things coming her way for sure."

Two of the biggest hitters on tour, Sabalenka and Anisimova have built one a riveting rivalry. They were squaring off for a fourth time this season (Roland Garros, Wimbledon, US Open, Riyadh).

Sabalenka saved all five break points she faced and converted two of the eight she created to scoop a highly-competitive opening set in 60 minutes.

Anisimova came out blazing in the second frame, breaking twice for a 4-0 gap. The American was punishing Sabalenka's second serve and pouncing on every short ball.

She was broken while serving for the set but recovered immediately to take the contest into a decider.

The moment of truth came in game seven for Sabalenka, who pulled off some incredible shots to break Anisimova for a 4-3 advantage.

With both players unleashing missiles from all corners of the court, Sabalenka found her best when she needed it most to claim her fifth victory from 11 meetings with Anisimova.—AFP

AMANDA Anisimova of the US hits a return against Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka during their semi-final.—Reuters

Karachi Blues triumph as Hamza, Saad shine

LAHORE: Mohammad Hamza's five-wicket haul and Saad Baig's twin centuries guided Karachi Blues to a convincing win over Peshawar on the final day of their sixth-round Quaid-i-Azam Trophy 2025-26 fixture at the Marghzar Cricket Ground, Islamabad.

Resuming their second innings at 92-4 while chasing a daunting 510-run target, Peshawar were dismissed for 291 in 81.4 overs. Iftikhar Ahmed's fighting 108 went in vain as pacer Hamza (5-63) ran through the batting order, with support from Mohammad Umar (2-42) and one wicket apiece for Saud Shakeel, Rameez Aziz and Saqib Khan.

Saad Baig, who scored 109 in the first innings and followed it up with 116 in the second, was named player of the match.

At the Shoaib Akhtar Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi, Abbottabad's match against Fata ended in a draw. Abbottabad, resuming from their overnight 424-8, were bowled out for 442 in 135 overs. Skipper Asif Afridi claimed 7-128 in 56 overs.

After enforcing the follow-on, FATA picked up two wickets as Abbottabad reached 165-2 at stumps on the final day. Opener Shahzaib Khan, who struck 167 in the first innings and an unbeaten 100 in the second, was declared player of the match.

At the Abbottabad Cricket Stadium, Sialkot continued their dominance against Bahawalpur, extending their overnight total of 375-1 to 614-9 at stumps on day four. Azan Awais (164 off 253 balls, 19 fours, one six) matched Muhammad Huraira's 178 from the previous day. Mohsin Riaz (74 off 92) and Abdullah Shafique (71 off 107) also made valuable contributions.

Hasan Ali struck a brisk 52 off 39 balls with nine boundaries and a six, while skipper Usama Mir added 45 off 92.

Bahawalpur's Saad Khan was adjudged player of the match for his all-round display — scoring 155 runs and claiming 5-85 with the ball.

The seventh round of the Quaid-i-Azam Trophy will commence on Tuesday, Nov 11.—Agencies

Asif eases through, Hasnain loses opener at worlds

DOHA: Defending champion Mohammad Asif of Pakistan made a commanding start to his title defence, while compatriot and teenage sensation Mohammad Hasnain suffered a narrow first-round defeat at the IBSF World Snooker Championship in Doha on Saturday.

In the opening group match, the 43-year-old Asif displayed his experience and form, sweeping past Singapore's Chan Keng Kwang in a straightforward 4-0 victory.

Asif dominated from the outset, sealing the first frame 89-9. He carried that momentum into the next, crafting a break of 66 on his way to a 73-44 win. The third frame was a tighter affair, but the Pakistani veteran edged it 58-48 before wrapping up the match emphatically with an 83-13 fourth-frame win, which included a 77 break.

In stark contrast, it was a day of heartbreak for the 16-year-old Under-17 champion, Hasnain, who lost a tense seven-frame battle to Hong Kong's Tam Yun Fung.

Hasnain started strongly, taking the first frame 73-38, but Tam responded with a 54 break to level the match by winning the second frame 77-42.

The young Pakistan player reclaimed the lead by taking a tight third frame 59-52, only for Tam to dominate the fourth 70-26. Hasnain forced a lead again after a 79-26 win in the fifth frame but Tam kept the match alive by taking the sixth 80-47.

The decider became a one-sided affair, but in Tam's favour, as the Hong Kong cueist compiled a superb century break of 100 to seal a 116-4 frame victory and the match 4-3, handing the promising teenager a defeat in his first outing.

The tournament's second stage features 48 players divided into 12 groups, with each player contesting three matches in the initial league round. The top two finishers from each group will advance to the knockout stage where the eight group winners qualify directly for the last 16.

The remaining four group winners and all 12 runners-up will compete in a preliminary last-24 round.—Agencies

Hamza, Abubakr clinch ITF Jr doubles title

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Hamza Roman and Abubakr Talha defeated Mikaeel Ali Baig and Kristijonas Milasauskas to win the doubles title of the ITF Pakistan World Junior Tennis Championship J-60 here at the PTF-SDA Tennis Complex on Saturday.

Hamza and Abubakr beat the pair of Pakistan's Mikaeel and Milasauskas of Lithuania 6-4, 6-4, to clinch the decider.

Haniya Aman Minhas of Saudi Arabia outplayed Russia's Varvara Rubtsova 6-1, 6-1 in the girls' singles final.

In the girls' doubles final, the pair of Haniya and Turkey's Ecrin Lal downed the Turkish duo of Deniz Cakil and Serifie Pelin Sari 6-4, 6-0.

The boys' singles final will be played between Hamza and Mikaeel on Sunday.

Players from China, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Lithuania, Russia, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Nepal besides hosts Pakistan are participating in the championship.—Sports Reporter

Sinner, Alcaraz chase year-end top spot in ATP Finals

TURIN: Jannik Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz are poised to reignite their rivalry at the ATP Finals, with the year-ending championship that begins on Sunday expected to produce another title showdown between the pair in a season that has belonged to them.

The dominant duo of men's tennis have shared the four Grand Slams this season, facing off in three finals, to set the stage for another encounter in Turin that will decide who walks away from the Inalpi Arena with the bragging rights.

Up for grabs in the Nov 9-16 finale is the year-end world number one ranking, with Sinner needing a flawless run to remain on top, while Spaniard Alcaraz can leapfrog him with a string of early victories or a run to the final.

"Ending as the world number one has been an important goal for me. In the beginning [of the year] I didn't think about it," said Alcaraz, who leads Sinner by 1,050 points in the ATP Live Race that serves as the measuring stick.

"I'm really motivated to perform well, play my best tennis, try to get some wins and qualify for the semi-finals. Doing good in this tournament, winning matches, comes together with ending the year as the number one. It's the same motivation."

An unbeaten singles champion would also walk away with a little more than $5 million, apart from 1,500 points. The $15.5-million event will also feature the best eight doubles teams in a similar round-robin format before the semi-finals.

Alcaraz had reclaimed top spot by reaffirming his dominance over Sinner in their head-to-head battles with a win in the US Open final in September but an early Paris Masters exit allowed his Italian rival to climb back to the summit with the trophy.

Sinner, who lost an epic French Open title clash to Alcaraz before gaining revenge in the Wimbledon final, said that recent results had opened the door for him to finish as the year-end number one and he was keeping a close eye on the scenarios.

"But at the same time, if he plays really well there's no chance, it doesn't matter what my result is," defending champion Sinner said.

The duo will have to navigate a strong field featuring twice champion Alexander Zverev, American challengers Ben Shelton and Taylor Fritz, and Australian dark horse Alex de Minaur.—Reuters